

Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena

December 1997

Location	Date	Time Local/ Standard	Path Length (Miles)	Path Width (Yards)	Number of Persons Killed	Number of Persons Injured	Estimated Damage Property	Estimated Damage Crops	Character of Storm
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INDIANA, Northwest

INZ003

La Porte

09 2100EST
10 0800EST

0 0

Heavy Snow

A band of heavy snow fell across extreme northwest Indiana during the evening of the 9th and ended the morning of the 10th. Eight to 10 inches of snow fell over portions of Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. Some snowfall amounts include: Indiana Dunes - 6.1 inches in Porter county, and LaPorte - 9.5 inches in LaPorte county.

INZ003>004

La Porte - St. Joseph

30 1800EST
31 1400EST

0 0

Heavy Snow

A lake effect snow event began during the evening of the 30th and ended during the afternoon of the 30th. The heavy snow band fell across portions of LaPorte, Porter and St. Joseph counties, with the heaviest amounts reported from LaPorte county. Those amounts include; LaPorte - 13 inches, Michigan City - 10.5 inches, and Rolling Prairie - 12.5 inches.

MICHIGAN, West

MIZ077>078

Berrien - Cass

04 1900EST
05 1700EST

0 0

Lake Effect Snow

An upper level low pressure system brought colder air across Lake Michigan into western Lower Michigan during the night of Thursday, December 4th through late afternoon Friday, December 5th. West to northwest winds brought lake effect snow showers inland across most of the western counties of the lower peninsula, resulting in snow accumulations which ranged from 1 to 11 inches in the above noted counties. As is typically the case with lake effect, snowfall totals across the region were highly variable in nature. Roads became snow-covered and slippery in the region with the usual increased number of minor accidents associated with snowfall across West Michigan. The morning rush hour was especially hazardous, as heavier snow squalls were reported south of Grand Rapids and Holland across Allegan and Van Buren Counties. Snowfall reports indicated the most significant accumulations were across Mason, Oceana, northern Muskegon, Allegan, Van Buren, northern Cass, and western Kalamazoo Counties. In these areas, accumulations averaged 6 to 11 inches. Snow reports included 11.2 inches in Scottville, 8 inches in Plainwell and Oshtemo, 7.5 inches in Pentwater, and 6 inches in Cassopolis.

MIZ077>081

Berrien - Cass - St. Joseph - Branch - Hillsdale

10 0100EST
1600EST

0 0

Winter Storm

A winter storm which tracked across the Ohio Valley region from southwest Indiana into northern Ohio produced an area of heavy, wet snow across the southern third of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Snow first moved into the southern border counties of the state shortly after midnight on Wednesday, December 10th. Snow ended from west to east during the early afternoon hours. The heaviest snow fell between 6 and 10 am, when snowfall rates of 1 to 2 inches per hour were common along and south of a line from Holland to Grand Rapids to St. Johns in Clinton County. Snow accumulations across the mentioned counties ranged from 3 to 12 inches, with 8 to 12 inch totals concentrated in Eaton, Ingham, and Jackson Counties.

With the heaviest snow falling during the morning rush hour, numerous accidents were reported. Three fatalities were blamed on weather-related, serious traffic accidents. One 18 year-old female was killed when the automobile she was riding in slid into the path of an oncoming school bus, shortly before 8 am in Mason, south of Lansing in Ingham County. The driver, a 17 year-old male was in serious condition upon arriving at a local hospital. Two cars collided on Michigan Highway 66 in Calhoun County around 10:30 am, resulting in a fatality. No information about the victim was available. Another fatal accident claimed the life of a Spring Arbor man who was killed instantly when his automobile was struck by oncoming traffic, after he lost control when trying to pass a county snow plow on southbound U.S. Highway 127 around 3 pm in Jackson County. Several other injury and property damage accidents were reported throughout the storm. Three school bus-car related accidents occurred in a one-hour period in Ingham County, between 7:30 and 8:30 am. Many area schools along and north of Interstate 94 started classes for the day because snow had not yet started falling at the decision-making time of 4-5:30 am, even though Winter Storm Warnings had been posted the night before. However, snow became heavy at the onset, catching many school bus drivers off-guard. Many schools which had opened for the day sent students home early.

The weight of the wet snow caused power outages in Berrien, Branch, Hillsdale, Ingham, and Jackson Counties. Up to 18,000 customers lost power at the height of the storm due to arcing wires and downed branches. Flight delays and cancellations were common at airports across southern Michigan and local bus service was suspended for several hours of the day in Jackson.

Snowfall reports included 10-12 inches in Jackson County, 10 inches in Mason, 7.5 to 9 inches in the city of Lansing, 8.8 inches in Portland, 8 inches in Eaton Rapids, 7 inches in Hastings, 6-7 inches in Kalamazoo, 6.6 inches in Battle Creek, 6 inches in Plainwell, 5.2 inches in Grand Haven, 4-6 inches across the Grand Rapids metropolitan area (4.6 inches at the National Weather Service Office in southeast Grand Rapids), and 4 inches in Muskegon and St. Johns.

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December 1997									
Location	Date	Time Local/ Standard	Path Length (Miles)	Path Width (Yards)	Number of Persons		Estimated Damage		Character of Storm
					Killed	Injured	Property	Crops	

MICHIGAN, West

MIZ077>078

Berrien - Cass

30 0700EST
31 1300EST

0

0

Lake Effect Snow

A northwest wind flow around a strong low pressure system which was moving up the East Coast brought a surge of arctic air south across Lake Michigan from Tuesday morning, December 30th, through midday Wednesday, December 31st. Lake effect snow brought accumulations which ranged from 2 to 12 inches across the counties bordering Lake Michigan. The only inland county which received significant accumulations was Cass County, which received 2 to 4 inches of snow. Major highways affected by the heavy snow showers included Interstate 94 west of Paw Paw, Interstate 196 south of Zeeland, Interstate 96 in Muskegon County, and U.S. Highway 31 along the length of the West Michigan lake shore. Snowfall reports included 12 inches in New Buffalo, 8-12 inches in South Haven area, around 6 inches in the Benton Harbor/St. Joseph area, and 5-8 inches across Muskegon, Oceana, and Lake Counties.